

**Economic and Social Council
2016 Thematic discussion**

“Infrastructure for sustainable development for all”

**Thursday, 21 July 2016, 9-11:30 am
ECOSOC Chamber, New York**

Concept note

Background¹

Resilient infrastructure is fundamental to sustainable development. Decisions on infrastructure have profound economic, social and environmental impacts. Properly planned and implemented infrastructure is a pre-requisite for advances across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including for economic growth, reducing poverty and inequality, and ensuring environmental sustainability. However, the global infrastructure gap is a significant challenge. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda estimated that the infrastructure financing gap in developing countries is between \$1 and 1.5 trillion annually.

Infrastructure plays a major role in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda addresses infrastructure directly through SDG 9, which commits the international community to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation. Resilient infrastructure is also a cross-cutting element for other SDGs, with several sector-specific targets.

Several other landmark agreements reached in 2015 also address this theme. The Paris Climate Change Agreement recognises that infrastructure will be needed that enables countries to adapt to, and mitigate, climate change impacts. Sustainable and resilient infrastructure has a central role in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA). The AAAA commits the international community to support national governments and local authorities of developing countries to realize resilient, sustainable infrastructure and provides a comprehensive framework for mobilising the means to finance it. While the SDGs focus primarily on infrastructure outcomes, the emphasis in the Addis Agenda is on overcoming obstacles and bottlenecks, including financial and capacity, to infrastructure investments.

Infrastructure also features prominently in other major intergovernmental outcomes related to sustainable development. The Istanbul Programme of Action, the SAMOA Pathway and the Vienna Programme of Action on Landlocked Developing States, highlight infrastructure as a crucial means to foster sustainable development in least developed countries, Small Island Developing States and landlocked developing countries, respectively. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 highlights infrastructure as fundamental in addressing disasters as it supports prevention, resilience and reconstruction. The increasing incidence and magnitude of natural disasters are also likely to impact the sustainability of infrastructure. And new and resilient

¹ The discussion will be informed by the Note by the Secretary-General on “Infrastructure for sustainable development for all”, (E/2016/70).

infrastructure will be needed to support sustainable urbanization, as the number of people living in cities in emerging markets is expected to double, adding 2 billion more people, by 2030.

In recent years there have been several new global, regional and national initiatives aimed at increasing investment in infrastructure, including initiatives by multilateral development banks. In Africa, for example, infrastructure is a priority element for realizing the vision of Africa's Agenda 2063.

In the Addis Agenda, United Nations Member States welcomed the new initiatives yet found that more needed to be done. In particular, all countries and sectors need access to the financing and technical expertise necessary to ensure sufficient investment and that all infrastructure investment is resilient and aligned with sustainable development. Toward this end, the Addis Agenda established a new Global Infrastructure Forum, to be led by the multi-lateral development banks (MDBs). The inaugural meeting of the Forum was held in April 2016 in Washington D.C., hosted by the World Bank and organized by the MDBs in close cooperation with the United Nations.

2016 ECOSOC thematic discussion

Within this context, the 2016 thematic discussion of the Economic and Social Council on the theme "*Infrastructure for sustainable development for all*" will aim to promote the alignment of resilient infrastructure with sustainable development. The deliberations will highlight specific examples of policy initiatives, strategic thinking and appropriate partnerships that have served to incentivise action towards sustainable infrastructure development. The discussion will also seek to identify opportunities for improving access to reliable and sustainable infrastructure for all countries and peoples, so that no one is left behind.

A broad range of voices will be engaged in this global dialogue on infrastructure for sustainable development for all. The results of the deliberations will inform the Inter-agency Task Force report on Financing for Development, which includes a section on infrastructure, as well as the 2017 Global Infrastructure Forum. The particular infrastructure needs of Africa and other developing regions will be prioritised against the backdrop of the UN 2015 landmark agreements.

Format

The Thematic discussion will commence with a keynote address contextualising the issue. The distinguished panellists following the keynote speaker will each offer a brief presentation (7 minutes) on particular aspects of the theme. A moderated interactive dialogue with representatives of UN Member States, the UN system and other stakeholders will then culminate the deliberations. A summary of the discussions will be prepared on behalf of the ECOSOC President, for the benefit of all participants.